

The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company



Handbook

2025 – Edition 1

www.southdevonplayers.com

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Introduction

This is a handbook put together for actors and crew with the South Devon Players. It is designed to send out to the cast and crew at the start of each new project, and for anyone who joins us part way through the production.

While many of the points will be considered very basic, we have found that because we attract a people with wide range of experience, from complete beginners to theatre, to people who have worked in the industry professionally for decades, we can encounter a lot of misconceptions and knowledge gaps, being a professional theatre company in a small town.

The majority of policies of how we work, are centred on national and international best practice, and the same expectations that would be in place if you were involved in theatre anywhere else.

A list of links to external online resources can be found at the back of this book.

Everyone involved in a production is expected to take into account the mental and physical safety of our cast, crew and audience; maintaining a professional reputation for our creatives and organisation, and creating high quality shows.

As a quick note before we begin; many people are surprised to learn that there is professional theatre based in Torbay, and come to us looking for drop-in activities, or a hobby club. Contrary to those assumptions, we are not a suitable organisation for that kind of activity. Joining us is on the understanding that you will commit, including via a signed actors/ crew agreement, to the project dates and timeline, as well as the highest standards of professional behaviour and performance, as agreed at the time of the auditions.

By the time you are offered a role in a show, it is assumed that you will have read the casting call and audition pack, ensured that you are available for general rehearsal times, all show dates, and all locations, checked this in your diary, and also checked your travel commitments for feasibility.

(The expectation is that as a professional actor you will have checked these details against your diary and commitments, before applying. In the wider world any actors agent, or film/ theatre production will expect you to do this.)

We do not usually accept cast or crew based outside Devon, because of not having the funds or personal housing situations to put people up locally. There are occasional exceptions if someone is temporarily in the local area for other reasons or has made their own arrangements.

All actors and crew must be legally able to work in the UK (citizenship, or settled status). We sometimes receive online requests from other countries to traffic people illegally to the UK. These requests are reported to the authorities in both countries.

All actors and crew are expected to work to their best at all times. Whether in a village hall or a large theatre, you never know who may come to see you – agents, casting directors, big name producers. It can happen anywhere any time, and treating a performance as “its

only something small” is likely to not only damage your career, but also that of other people in the show, and of the company in general.

The jobs of creatives

Regardless of background, background or demographics, our jobs as actors and creatives is to create a world class theatre experience for our audiences and to further our careers, both personally and for one another.

Remember that your performance isn't just on stage in some small town, but is also streaming online across the UK and USA on two platforms.

Furthermore:

Remember that even in the smallest village hall that agents, casting directors and producers may see you – this is how career reputations can be made and broken, you have a responsibility both to yourself and to everyone else.

What happens – Auditions

Virtually all of our auditions are open. This means that anyone may come and audition. It allows for discovering new talent, removes perceptual barriers of “I haven't done it before” or “I haven't been to drama school” or “I haven't got an agent”.

Everyone, regardless of whether we know you or not, is auditioned with the same chances for the roles in the show.

We openly advertise the auditions with posters in local notice boards, online on acting and local social media, and via our own social media and contacts. We provide the audition sides, and production information in a downloadable for online, and while we will also audition people who come in without having checked these, we do recommend accessing the google drive of information and sides ahead of time.

You are encouraged to email if you have any questions ahead of the audition day.

So – on the audition day! This is usually on a Sunday, at our usual rehearsal base Chestnut Community Centre, 1 – 3 Poplar Close, Brixham, TQ5 0SA. We have the doors open at 12 and we start at 1pm.

Upon arrival, you are asked to sign in, fill out an audition form, if you haven't already done one, have a coffee/ tea, and get ready for that 1pm start. We recommend bringing a notepad, pen and your diary. Always dress comfortably – being comfortable is how you will do your best performance.

We strongly recommend reading for two or three contrasting roles; so that you can show off a range of performances, and so that we can see where you best fit within the dynamics of the show and casting decisions.

If you have driven to the community centre, please be aware that the community centre is in a residential road so please park respectfully, so that local residents can also enter and exit their homes and driveways at will. You may need to use adjoining roads if there are a lot of cars.

We have a single room that takes up the downstairs of the community centre, for the auditions. You will see a table with three to four panel seats, and a semicircle of chairs. You can sit anywhere you wish in the semi-circle.

If you are aged under 16, you are required to attend with a parent or legal guardian. If you are over 16 but are anxious, you may bring a friend to sit in with you.

At 1pm, the panel will introduce themselves, outline the plans for the production, remind you of key production dates, and answer any questions you have. Never be afraid to ask – it could well be that someone else is wondering the exact same thing.

We then read out Equity's Safe Spaces policy, as a contract of appropriate respect between us all in the room, and begin the auditions.

At the time of audition we ask you to let us know any dates you are away covering the entire project timeline of rehearsals and shows, so that we can put together a rehearsal schedule to the majority availability – you will be asked to put these on your audition form.

We see auditions for each character in turn. You will be asked to stand up and read/perform the sides alongside people playing other characters in that scene. We may ask you to read once, or we may ask you to read it again, with a note or piece of direction. We do not expect you to have learned the text, but we do expect reading with expression and commitment to the scene.

The panel will be looking for

- Arriving on time and being pleasant with other people.
- Expression and commitment to the scene. We don't expect you to second-guess every nuance of how the scene will be staged, but what we don't want is reading an expressionless list of words with no understanding or feeling.
- Willingness to “read in” and support others
- The ability to take and work with a small piece of direction.
- The strengths of each person in the type of characters and roles they are most suited to, within the dynamics of the play.

The audition process is open ended. We usually suggest keeping yourself available until 5pm. We will see everyone who attends, but this can take a little while.

In SDP everyone multitasks, and some panel members may audition for roles also. If this is the case, those members may not decide on the casting for the roles for which they have auditioned, and those decisions fall to the remaining panel members.

After the auditions, the panel retire to discuss the castings. If we have an additional question for anyone who has auditioned, we will pull that person aside and ask.

Role offers are sent out over the next two or three days. It can be anything from hours, to a day or two, so please keep an eye on your messages. We do ask that you respond as soon as you are able.

The full cast and crew will be asked to convene at 1pm on the following Sunday for a full preparatory read-through and housekeeping. We strongly prefer that this is attended – past experience shows that people who miss the read-through struggle later on with the production and there can be delays caused as a result, affecting others.

What happens – read-through

Readthrough Day is the first day that the cast and crew come together. This is not a normal rehearsal although it begins at our usual Sunday start time of 1pm, and it can go on late, to around 5pm. (again, please arrive before 1pm, to be ready to start at 1pm).

First of all, the cast and crew all introduce themselves, and we talk through housekeeping notes. Housekeeping usually includes

- Checking costume measurements and sizes
- Covering any access requirements for disabilities, neurodivergence, etc so that we can put together our access rider for touring to venues, and for us to all be aware of any access needs of one another, to ensure a safe and problem-free rehearsal space.
- Confirming all major production dates are in your diary
- Handing out the actors / crew agreements and appropriate behaviour contracts (to be signed and returned at the next rehearsal)

The readthrough itself is a slow process. This is the time for a lot of stopping and starting

You may need to ask how an unfamiliar or foreign word is pronounced (please pencil in the phonetic pronunciation in your script).

There may be script cuts (eg in a longer Shakespeare play) and you need to pencil these in as we go. It is important to mark them in, even if they are not your line/ action, because this will affect your readiness for cues and reactions later.

You may need to ask what something means or the social context of something (eg in Shakespeare, or something set in a different historical period). Make as many notes as you can.

We finish with a big full team photo for the show social media, celebrating the new show and the start of the new production.

What happens – rehearsals

And now we are into the rehearsal process. Just a reminder – rehearsals are at Chestnut Community Centre, 1-3 Poplar Close, Brixham TQ5 0SA.

Start times are when you need to be ready on stage – we always allow for an hours window before that for arrival and getting ready.

Wednesdays - Doors open from 6pm so that you can be ready to start at 7pm, going

through until 9, or 9.30pm, and Sundays, doors open at 12, to be ready to start at 1pm through until 4pm.

Always bring your script, a pencil, your diary, and a notepad.

Until you are given your costume to wear, always wear comfortable, covering clothes and flat clean shoes that are easy to move in.

There are always coffee, tea, and fruit squash available at our rehearsals.

To begin with, rehearsals will run specific sections of the play, eg, the first half or second half; in chronological order. We look at entrances, exits, movement on stage, and build up characterisation. Please pencil these into your script as we work through the scenes.

Depending on the show and your role, you may be asked to attend specific days, or there may be days you are not required. At the time of audition we ask you to let us know any dates you are away covering the entire project timeline of rehearsals and shows, so that we can put together a rehearsal schedule to the majority availability.

We have an expectation that everyone aims for a minimum of 75% attendance of the rehearsals, and of course 100% of the shows, for which you are required. Our kind of work is entirely collaborative, which means that everyone else relies on you being present, just as you rely on them being there. Someone else can cover and read in, but it can change the dynamics and is not the same as rehearsing with the usual person.

In case of sudden unavoidable emergency, it is expected that you send a text/ social media message/email to the show director to let them know. Repeated no-showing with no communication is likely to result in the role being recast after the second instance.

There are internal deadlines for learning choreography, scripts, etc, so that the show can come together smoothly. There is usually a general one, but if someone has joined us later on individual ones may be discussed and arranged.

Any difficulties with deadlines must be discussed with the director ahead of time and a specific personal deadline set. This must be well before the date of the first performance. No cast member may go on stage with a script or not knowing their lines, unless they have been cast within 7 days of the performance as an emergency.

A key part of the preparation of the show is learning the lines and blocking (on-stage movement and placements, as well as entrances and exits) for the show. Because we tour to a variety of different spaces with different layouts, we start with a general blocking which covers a majority of spaces, but between show performances there may be an extra rehearsal to go over changes to fit the next space.

There are deadlines for learning the lines and the blocking, and as said before, while we have a general deadline, it may be that someone joining us later, or with a specific access need may have a different personal deadline, discussed in advance with the director.

Never alter the blocking without discussion with the director. Not only do the other people in your scenes rely on knowing where you are moving and what you are doing, but the technicians need to make sure you are lit to the best effect for you and the show, and if you move somewhere else, the other actors and the show technicians will struggle to keep you looking at your best.

Understudies

We would love to have understudies and swings for roles – especially people who can be on call for situations where someone has gone off ill or had an emergency. In general terms, that understudy would be cast in another role in the show where they can then double up to cover, or they may wish to cover in some other flexible capacity. If you are interested, please discuss with us. :) Make no mistake, understudies are invaluable and as much a part of the team as anyone else.

Required conduct at rehearsals is strict.

Please arrive in good time ready to start and be appropriately dressed (comfortable rehearsal clothes or in your costume). There are chairs and sofas across the “backstage” half of the room where you can sit and watch the other scenes.

We do not allow phones (they must be put on silent and put away) in rehearsals, unless being used by crew for very specific tasks (eg videoing a piece of choreography for cast use). There have sadly been too many instances of issues caused in rehearsals and shows like missed entrances, ringtones going off, or missing a critical part of the production, due to scrolling on phones, so we have now had to take this action.

Backstage chatting/ jumping about/ noise is not acceptable. When awaiting your scene or cue, please sit quietly, following the play in your script. This will help you learn the whole show, context and cues. The time for socialising is in the hour before the rehearsals begin, or in breaks.

Backstage chatting can again distract other people, it can mean that people miss cast notices, critical production information, directions and cues, and is not permissible in any professional rehearsal.

In our company, additionally, there are also a number of neurodivergent crew and cast, who cannot focus if there is a lot of background chatter or distraction, and it can cause a huge additional amount of stress.

In shows where we have actors aged under 16, they must be accompanied by a parent or their legal guardian. That parent must legally remain in their line of sight at all times. That parent must also adhere to the same rules. Vulnerable adults may be accompanied by a parent or carer as well (again who is subject to the same rules).

The rehearsals run by working through scenes and building the show. The scenes run in chronological order, though especially early on we may start and stop, repeat scenes, and experiment with staging, special effects, and interpretations. There is usually a break around half-way through the session. Directions will be given and need to be noted as we go.

In terms of characterisation, we love it when actors use elements of their own personalities and skillsets, in bringing the character to life. While this will be directed, we welcome questions or ideas from actors and crew – many minds make a much more nuanced and interesting range of characters, than one mind; and everyone has an individual skillset which is lovely to see.

There is a specific etiquette around this in performance. It is never acceptable to stop scenes and shout out suggestions, or to approach other actors. The “done” thing is to come to the directing team quietly in break and discuss the idea. Cast directing other cast (what we call “backseat directing”) is also not a done thing.

At the end of the rehearsal session, everyone is asked to help tidy up – this includes washing, drying and putting away any mugs used in the kitchenette, sweeping the floor, wiping down any tables or surfaces, and bringing any props or costume bags back to be put away in the props cupboard.

This is because Chestnut Community Centre is a small, volunteer run community centre, and each hiring group is required to clean up to leave the space ready for the next hirers – and if we all do a bit, it means it is all done in about 5 minutes.

Choreography / blocking

Shows may commonly require specific choreography, this may include action/ fight scenes, dance or movement, or other parts of the show where specific movement sequences are needed.

In the first stages of the choreography, the director and/or choreographer will discuss things like physical performance skills or limits, and any boundaries about contact with another person. The choreography is then built around the show design, performance spaces and with the specific physical and sensory boundaries of the participants in mind.

Nobody who is not involved in the choreography, may re-choreograph scenes, they may not be familiar with all the particulars of performers abilities, preferences or safety.

The choreography, for the safety of all performers and audience, must not be altered without the choreographer.

All choreography will be recorded, so that there is a full record of what is agreed and set.

Should an actor require adjustment to the choreography, for example due to a sudden injury from wider parts of life, they should approach the director and choreographer to re-plan the scene with respect to the actors wellbeing, this must be set with the choreographer and director.

Safety of the cast, crew and audience comes before anything in all choreography.

Blocking is the planned placement of the actors, their movements on stage and entrances/exits. Never alter the blocking without discussion with the director. Not only do the other people in your scenes rely on knowing where you are moving and what you are doing, but the technicians need to make sure you are lit to the best effect for you and the show, and if you move somewhere else, the other actors and the show technicians will struggle to keep you looking at your best

NOTE – Combat/ action

Many of our shows contain action scenes. These are strictly choreographed by our fight director, and for safety of both our team and audiences, must not be deviated from. Any

physical limitations of the actors must be communicated at the start of the rehearsal process to the fight choreographer, to be taken into account . If there are large or complex fight scenes you may be called in on Sunday lunch times to practice as needed.

NOTE – Intimacy

Intimacy can include anything from touching or kissing through to the suggestion of sexual intercourse. As our shows are usually family friendly, we keep the content of our shows in line with that suitability. Any scenes involving intimacy, including kissing or hand holding, take place with the designated intimacy director. The notes given here are set for our shows, where more “R” rated intimacy scenes are virtually unheard of. Actors in roles involving these kind of scenes, must be aged over 18 at the time of rehearsals as well as performance.

These are additional rehearsals, which require a closed set – the relevant actors, the intimacy director and one other person (director or assistant director) are the only people who may be present, while these scenes are choreographed. Actors will be asked about any boundaries (eg “I do not like being kissed, please can we hold hands to show the other characters affection for me instead” is a perfectly acceptable thing to say) and to participate in an open discussion. At no point will the intimacy choreographer ask anyone to do anything they are uncomfortable with, and at any stage, any actor involved can say no, or they are not comfortable with something. That will not be questioned, and a different way to show what is happening in the scene, will be found.

It is very important to note that this choreography must not be changed without full discussion with the other affected actors and with the intimacy choreographer. It should also be noted that “on stage” relationships or behaviour are just that, and should not be taken to indicate any relationship or feelings “offstage”. Inappropriate behaviour will result in immediate recasting.

NOTE – Dance

Many times there is a small amount of dance in our shows. Again, this is choreographed and the choreography cannot be deviated from.

Characterisation and script exploration :

At South Devon Players, we expect excellent character development- it’s one of the most key basic things (along with line learning) that delivers an excellent show . Develop a rock solid, believable, detailed character and you are roaring ahead.

This is something which we will begin to run in rehearsals giving everyone time to work at it.

To prepare you’ll need to go through your script (the bits you’re in AND the bits you’re not!) with a fine tooth comb. And then...

bear in mind the setting. Think of the time and location, society, and cultural expectations of the time where the show is set. This may be found in reading up online about the historical period, as well as studying the script.

Our actors and crew will be involved in preparing videos for students, about the show, including being interviewed convincingly as their characters, and discussing their process in developing the role. ,.

- Laura

PREPARATION TASK 1: getting facts from the script.

Explore and note what the script says about your character and the society in which they live.

If we are using a historical setting for the show, it is also strongly advised to read up about the specific historical period, its society and cultural expectations.

Go through the script and note down:

who your character is (age, nationality, religion, social status, etc)

what do they say about themselves? (Motivations, likes, dislikes, habits, hopes for the future, life experiences in the past, family, etc)

What do other characters say about them? Are those things true or not? Why?

what do they do in the story and why?

what does the manner in which they speak, tell you about them?

PREPARATION TASK 2: fill in the gaps.

– these can be anything that you build to round the character. This is where you create back stories in depth to round out the characters: For example, does your character like music? What were you doing yesterday, before the events in the play began? What food and drink do you like? Who are your friends outside of the story?

Think of what is in keeping with the character but also (I'm a great fan of this) use aspects of yourself. Expand it – even to the point that it may seem inconsequential to the story.

There are no right or wrong answers in this bit; it is all about creating a unique, well-rounded character, making them your own, and believable.

PREPARATION TASK 3 – being the character

This will be done in groups, but it will also be something useful to do at home. (don't use it to annoy anyone else).

Spend some time doing some daily tasks as your character. Think about how they might physically feel, respond to things, and replicate it. It can be incredibly simple. If you are making a cup of coffee, do it as your character. You are putting a chair in your garden to sit in the sunshine and read a book – do that bit as your character. There will be differences in how your character responds to the broken-down tasks. It will also be

influenced by what you are wearing, what space you are in, what your character believes.

We bring in exercises into the rehearsal space, and also use these next activities to create education packs for students, to send out to schools and colleges. By the time we do these, you should have a strongly developed character, and be able to be “hot-seated” as your character.

THE INTERVIEW

NOW what will happen over the next few rehearsals (I will be targeting the “old hands” first!) is the TV interview exercise.. They won’t all be the same day- they will be divided up. They will also assume that the events in the act(s) being rehearsed that day, are the “current” events happening.

Your character will be brought in for an interview - it is really important that you are working in- character for this and have done your preparation work! It’s not a thing that can be “winged” or made up on the day (if you do, you will be asked to redo it for the next session)

These are filmed and included in the online “education pack” available to students and schools so it is ultra important this is taken seriously. There will also be followup videos about your process of developing your character for the education pack as well.

In the interview, you will be asked to respond “in character” to various questions from the “interviewer”, which will ask you to introduce yourself, tell us a bit about your past, tell us a bit about your character's day up to this point, ask questions about what is happening in the story at that stage, and what your character thinks about those events. You may also get one or two wildcard questions based on the wider history or society of the setting that would have affected your character.

THE OUTCOME

This is all to underpin how you “become” your character on stage. Remember, acting is not about “pretending to be” the character; as something external and different from you; it is about “becoming” the character for the time you are rehearsing and performing.

All of this is aimed to help you reach a point where we are not seeing you as an actor on stage , we are seeing your character, as convincing, and natural (and forgetting that the character is played by an actor).

Line learning techniques

From Laura

- Mine:

- going over lines just before bed

- going over lines while doing other repetitive tasks or rehearsing the movements that go alongside them.
- repetition of chunks until correct, then doing next chunk and so on, each day until all there and you can run through it first time correct.

Other common ones that I find people do:

- recording your lines and cues and listening back to them
- recording the other persons lines leaving gaps for you to say your lines
 - - writing their lines out multiple times

Other favourite techniques collated from actors on theatre pages submitted for this document:

Break down into chunks, learn 1st line, learn 1st and 2nd line, learn 1st, 2nd, 3rd line.. and so on

When happy move on to next chunk...

I record the other characters lines, leaving the required time my lines take.....page by page of the script and repeat until that page is locked in my brain and move on ...

If that makes any sorta sense... It does perfectly in my mind but when i've written it down it just looks weird.

There are also a lot of apps like Linelearner and scriptrehearser and there are Facebook pages like "need a reader be a reader" that can help! I find read once then running them just before bed in my head helps. Best of luck to everyone!

Write down the first letter of each word and then use those as as the prompts for the words.

Eg To be or not be becomes

Tbontb

It's particularly efficient with Monologues and helps with dialogue but you do need the other half of the conversation.

Speaking them aloud, over and over, looking at script less and less. Getting someone to listen to me and prompt if necessary. But I still find rehearsals the best!

I feel it's important to know what type of learner one is.

A visual learner can do well with writing out the lines; an auditory learner by repeat listening; a kinesthetic one with practicing their lines with blocking/movement.

In the end, whatever method is effective, is made more so if the act is one that can be done with relative ease. We all have our struggles; finding the right method is the first step, and then making it streamlined and simple to do is the next. For example, as a visual

learner, I used to make flashcards. That was fine, but then I enjoyed the process more, and learned more effectively, by using regular pieces of paper.

I used to listen to lines over and over again - but I now find that I do better to concentrate on what is going on in the scene without worrying so much about "remembering" lines. This seems like a very slow way to do it, but if I remember to be patient with myself and concentrate on what is going on, I find that I remember the lines more easily.

The exception to this is poorly written but long corporate scripts - then it's absolutely anything and everything that will make the lines stick including listening over and over, writing it out long hand, post it notes - whatever I can think of to do that helps!

(totally agree + learning lines as a consequence of being focused on the circumstances, means higher probability of authenticity & connection)

As a part of my daily vocal warm ups I say random lines I'm learning rather than tongue twisters

To start with I use a slightly adapted method I used as a teacher Read, Cover, Say, Check. Read the 1st line aloud, cover it up, say it aloud, uncover and check if you got it right. Once that line is learned move on to line 2. Then do both lines from memory. Learn line 3. Do all 3 lines from memory. It's a sort of snowball effect.

What happens – shows

And all too quickly – its show time!

On the Wednesdays before each performance, , we go through the blocking. Every venue has a different performance space with different layouts of the entrances and exits, so this rehearsal will be a cue-to-cue rehearsal. You will be expected to make a note of these in this rehearsal.

Any travel arrangements, car shares, public transport details are also discussed and arranged. After the first shows, the Sunday rehearsals will stop and just the Wednesdays continue.

What to bring to a show

Venues may be in city centres or in remote villages. It is easiest to be self contained for all of them. It is well worth preparing a "touring bag" - here is a list of things that are useful to bring, to start you off. It is also recommended to wear covering swimwear if using communal changing areas.

On longer trips, eg to Birmingham, there are comfort stops, and shops 5 minutes from the theatre, but it is still worth bring fully self contained.

- Fully charged power pack and lead for your phone
- any medication you may need
- wet wipes and hand sanitizer
- sanitary items (ladies)
- a spare Tshirt and socks
- script
- notebook

- deodorant
- a bottle of water
- snacks or a pot noodle
- makeup, comb, hairbrush as relevant.

Travel to shows

Outbound, all venues can be reached by public transport if needed, during daytime hours. If public transport exists and you do not drive, you are asked to make use of it, if possible. You may also be asked to take your costume bag with you.

We will ask people with access to vehicles, to help with moving props boxes/ small set pieces and drapes etc, and to help with lifts back from the shows when shows finish in the evenings. Any travelling outside of your route between the venue and your home (eg bringing someone directly home as it is late, or taking props back to Chestnut Community Centre), is reimbursed. If SDP request this, then SDP will cover the costs, if someone however asks you to give them a lift outside of SDPs Wednesday discussion, then that someone needs to reimburse for fuel.

If you have agreed to give someone a lift, or help move costumes/ props, then people are reliant on that. Nobody/ no kit should be left stranded, even if (in emergency) second trips must be made.

For trips beyond the Southwest, eg to Birmingham or London, we will be travelling in a group via a minibus. Those shows are dependant on raising the funds for the minibus.

Please see the Profitshare notes.

At the venues

Arrival at the venue is at an agreed time-frame. If you are early and the venue is open, please politely introduce yourself and ask where to go.

Once props, set and lighting/sound arrive, we can fully start setting up.

The venue should first be checked for cleanliness and safety. Any concerns should be noted and the venue made aware at the earliest opportunity.

Performers will have designated changing spaces (depending on the venue this can range from specific dressing rooms in the larger theatres to a school desk in some venues within schools), and this cannot be altered. In changing areas segregated by age or gender, you cannot “hang out” in a different dressing room. In communal changing areas spaces will also be divided for best propriety, and again should not be altered.

Setting up the stage set, backdrops and technical equipment should be done by the designated people, with full regard for health & safety regulations. Please always call a warning if you are going to test lights or loud sounds/ feedback loops, as we have some people with sensory challenges who may need to leave the immediate space.

During the performance, once a prop, costume or other item, is finished with for the day, please ensure that it is packed away as we go; it makes it much easier at the end of the

show to pack down.

Every venue is different, but during setup, all cast and crew should check for:

- sight lines: remember if you can see the audience, they can see you – please don't poke your head round to look at the audience. You need to be out of sight until you come on.
- Sound: silence sidestage! If you can hear the audience, they can hear you, and again, we don't want them hearing you until you come on stage.
- Walk through their entrances and exits as practised on the previous Wednesday
- Make sure you know where your props and costumes are – are they ready for you in the places?
- Is all your personal property in your dressing room/ on your chair/ in your designated changing space?

At the end of the show, everyone helps pack down costumes, props, and set. Audience members cannot be co-opted to do this. The stage should be kept clear until the audience have departed, and then cast and crew can enter the stage to pack down set. All costume bags, props boxes and equipment should be brought to the stage to be packed into the relevant vehicles.

Actors and crew are also required to ensure that dressing rooms are left tidy and clean with all rubbish swept up and placed in appropriate bins, furniture replaced where it was found, any mugs or utensils washed up and kitchen areas wiped down. The space must be left as found, and as clean, or cleaner, than found. If the venue has a hoover or broom, please use the appropriate tool to clean the floors.

We want to be able to come back and use the venue for years in the future, and that will only happen if the space is respected.

What happens – after the show run

When the show run finishes – its all over: or is it?

Not quite.

The show will have been filmed for streaming online. We give it a few weeks and then send it out to our streaming partners.

At this stage, the production is also listed on IMDb.com and you will get a credit on there.

You are also going to get money. Now there is no guarantee as to how much it will be – you see, the ticket money (less venue hire) is shared to the cast and crew – so that's one of the reasons we like to get as many seats sold as possible! To date, over the years, it has ranged from everything from a few pence to around £150.

While we would love to get funding to pay everyone at full rates, that isn't possible usually so the profit-share split is as best we can manage.

(see Profitshare section for how this is worked out).

Our money from TicketSource (the venues where we manage the ticket sales: eg Torquay, Kingskerswell, Budleigh, Plymouth, Stokenham) comes through within a week or so of the final performance.

Other venues usually pay over the ticket money within 30 days of the performance date. If there are any delays from a venue, you will be appraised of what is happening.

As soon as the show money is through, you will receive your share and the breakdown of the profitshare working out as soon as possible. If we already have your bank details from a previous show, we will not need to ask for this, as it remains in our “trusted payees” on the SDP bank account. If this is your first show with us, we will need to ask you for your bank details, which we will do when the money is through.

Please also download and save any show photos from the project specific facebook groups etc, that you would like to keep – the group will remain active for a while, but will be closed down eventually. You may also request footage from the filmed performances for the purposes of using clips for your showreel.

If you are applying to Spotlight, you may also request a confirmation form from SDP confirming your role for your application.

We all help behind the scenes – this is collaboration on a huge scale.

Everything at SDP is collaborative. We all put a huge amount of time and energy in, to make this happen. This cannot be left to just one or two people – it is down to everyone to make the show a reality. This is recognised by the way our profitshare system is set up.

The most critical things to help with are:

- Helping with show publicity.

Everyone has friends, work/ college networks, local knowledge etc, The more the show is advertised, the more people come which means better ticket sales and earnings for the team.

We ask everyone involved in the show to share posters and images from the official SDP social media and websites, on their social media; to help by distributing posters in their local area to notice boards, shop windows, libraries, college, work, etc. Helping with door to door leafletting, information stalls at local events, is also brilliant.

SDP also sends invitations to agents, casting directors and industry professionals.

When involved in advertising anything for the Players, you should be approachable, polite, and knowledgeable: creating an excellent and engaging first impression is the first step to getting people interested.

The key question to remember: when you are looking at going to an event at a venue you know nothing about, or experiencing something new, what do you want to know about it? Always put yourself in the shoes of the person whom you are telling about the show.

Posters should be distributed to shops, community notice boards, libraries, etc, one month before the event. Doing this earlier means the posters may not be put up; and doing it later means that people may already have other plans on the show dates.

Posters should always be put up with permission. Flyposting is illegal and can attract huge fines.

Leaflets can be distributed door to door. If going door to door, please respect any signage from houses which do not wish to receive printed materials through the door, and always ensure front gates which you have had to open, are closed behind you.

Street leafletting is another option and again can be done – in costume. Check that the specific place that you are handing out leaflets, allows it. For example by-laws prohibit this activity in Torquay town centre.

Other tasks can involve helping distribute show press releases to local publications and radio (always check that it has not already been sent), sharing public posts on social media, finding new places to distribute posters and banners, and helping reach out to new contacts.

- Helping with show travel.

If you have access to a vehicle, helping with getting people and props back from shows is a lifeline for everyone. Any extra fuel costs are reimbursed.

- Helping setting up and packing down a show

A show cannot happen without setting up the set, backstage, and front of house areas – that takes a lot of hands. Everyone available is asked to help with this.

Actors/ Crew agreements and contracts.

On the first rehearsal day, which is a full cast read-through, actors and crew will be asked to sign actors/ crew agreements for the production. You will be asked to fill it out fully including your name & contact, the name of the show, the agreed dates on which you will be performing (writing general things like “all” is not acceptable) to show that you have agreed to the dates, checked them with your diary, and ensured that you can attend them.

Respect/boundaries

This links heavily with both safeguarding and intimacy, but also extends beyond that. You will be working with a diverse group of people, with a huge range of ages, experience levels, abilities/ disabilities, cultural differences, health conditions, gender identities, political / religious views.

What is important is that the group remains a safe, respectful space for everyone.

We therefore do not permit things like sexual humour, clothing with explicit or offensive motifs, derogatory comments identifying anyone.

People may have specific personal boundaries, over things which may seem harmless but is problematic for a specific person due to things like past traumas in life, or sensory considerations etc. like not being hugged or touched or unexpected loud sounds, etc. If anyone has a specific boundary like that, please let the show director know on the readthrough day, because of any show planning, and also if there is a situation like someone coming and hugging you as a greeting, and you do not want to be hugged, it is perfectly acceptable to calmly tell the person that this is not an acceptable interaction for you. (likewise if someone says that to you, it is not an insult, please simply respect it).

Inclusion, accessibility, equal opportunities

We have a huge range of backgrounds within our team, including ages, experience levels, abilities/ disabilities, cultural differences, health conditions, gender identities, political / religious views. We only know what is disclosed, of course, but nobody is to be discriminated against based on any of these “protected characteristics” .

Nobody can know everything about each other, and nobody is asked to disclose anything they do not wish to, and sometimes we will learn from each other about a condition and how to support one another.

When we tour to venues who do not know us, we send ahead what is known in the acting industry, as an “Access Rider” so that the venues know we will have people with specific access needs for visible and non-visible disabilities, with us.

The concept of reasonable access adjustments is a legal requirement in any organisation, and that can fall to us all, to be aware. Reasonable means that it is achievable within the means of the organisation and outcomes of the production. It is a requirement that if you are aware of an access need or an adjustment for a disability or protected characteristic, that all team members are expected to follow the guidance on keeping the space and project accessible for all.

The people with the disabilities are the ones to guide the rest of us on how to support them. Never ever try to “know better” than them and if there is an emergency that we cannot support, the directors have a contact for the next of kin to assist.

Backseat directing & decision making

Sometimes, especially with a female/ autistic led company, people will sometimes think that they are able to “take over”, which can include actors trying to direct or intimidate other actors/ crew, recruit friends as production crew with no company agreement, making bookings without checking with the company, or shouting out “do this instead” in a rehearsal. Regardless of the demographics or assumptions made of the company owners,

this is unacceptable, and will be shut down.

Suggestions are welcome but they should be addressed quietly to the director/ company and considered.

If something has not been arranged/ formally agreed ahead of time by the company directors as registered with Companies House then it is not official, and should be ignored. Any unauthorised “behind the scenes” directions/ requests received, should also be reported to the show directors.

“ Every single one of us working on this project is entitled to work in a safe space: a space free of fear, a space free of bullying and harassment of any kind. We will work together honouring our differences and celebrating the gifts we each bring to the table. We will treat one another with politeness and respect at all times and, if we are subjected to or witness bullying and harassment, we will speak out knowing that our voices will be heard and we will be taken seriously. Together we can create a Safe Space.”

Communication with the team

Between rehearsals there are regular communications, sharing of news/ pictures/ rehearsal information/ ticket sales & publicity news. This can be accessed by a cast and crew only Facebook group for the project, or via email or WhatsApp. It is very useful to keep up to speed with this information and additional useful news and materials that get shared. If you are a minor, please ask a parent or guardian to join for you. Content in this group should not be shared publicly.

Sharing external opportunities

We love receiving external opportunities. However, these must be paid or have expenses covered as within the means of the company/ production team; must not be exploitative, must not contravene Equity guidelines, and most importantly not be harmful to ongoing careers as actors or creatives (eg taking an unpaid commercial role could prevent you from taking on a paid commercial role for several years). Exploitative offers will be reported to and investigated by Equity.

Requests for money

South Devon Players is strictly against “pay to play”. While you might incur costs like busfares associated with coming to rehearsals or shows, SDP itself will never ask you for money to be involved. You will never be asked for audition fees, membership fees, photography fees, or anything else. Quite the opposite, we want to give YOU payments, free photos etc. If anyone requests money from you to participate in any show activity, or approaches you asking for personal loans/ gifts of money, this is unofficial and must be reported immediately to southdevonplayers@gmail.com; who may also, depending on the situation, refer the report to ActionFraud, and Equity.

Security of property and costumes

Costumes and props used in the show are the property of the South Devon Players, unless an actor is using or lending their own property.

All show properties should not be removed from the rehearsal or show space without formal authorisation and written signatures, tracking its location.

All items must be returned to SDP in excellent condition, at the end of the production. Anyone who does not return items, will not be eligible to be involved in future shows or activities, or to receive references, recommendations, or Spotlight/ IMDb credits for being in the shows with us, since we cannot recommend someone who has been engaged in thieving.

Publicity design

The company creates show posters, photos, videos and other content to promote the show. This is made available to actors, crew, supporters, social media, venues, and organisations of interest, to share and promote the shows.

If you wish to become involved in the publicity design / photography/ video recording for the shows, please speak to the show directors/ producers; this is to ensure that all relevant information, sponsor or quality brands, imagery, and information is standard, and accurate. If creating “fan accounts” on social media for one of our shows, and this is great, simply to note that this should be clearly stated as an unofficial fan account, and provide clear web links to the official South Devon Players accounts. All posts made should be well-spelled, and of a high standard.

When involved in advertising anything for the Players, you should be approachable, polite, Question: when you are looking at going to an event at a venue you know nothing about, or experiencing something new, what do you want to know about it? Put yourself in the shoes of the person looking at the advert.

Safeguarding

While we do our best to maintain a safe space, sometimes persons with more ulterior motives may try to get involved, or may not consider the requirements for safe and respectful conduct.

Please contact us immediately on southdevonplayers@gmail.com if anyone asks you for money, changes clothes in a manner that reveals underwear in front of a minor, makes sexual advances/ requests, ignores stated personal boundaries, is aggressive, takes photos backstage when someone is changing, or behaves in any manner which makes you feel unsafe. If it has taken place online, please keep screenshots.

Weapons

Our shows frequently involve the use of weapons, or props made to look like weapons. Since they are made to look like weapons, and to represent weapons in a show, they must be treated as the real thing. This includes guns, swords, knives, whips, large sticks/staves.

They are to be handed out and back to the designated show armourer or director; they must not be handled in a way that suggests joking around or unsafe handling of the real counterpart, or taken outside of the performance/ rehearsal space. There is strict choreography for their use and this must be followed at all times – no action should be improvised.

No horseplay / fooling with weapons can be permitted.

If damage is discovered, this should be reported to the show armourer.

Repeated horseplay, fooling around, ignoring of direction, choreography or safety notes will mean that you cannot handle them, and if that means you cannot play your role (eg if you were playing a soldier), you will be recast.

Visitors

In rehearsals, we may accept visitors who are either carers of cast/ crew members, or who are in the care of a cast/ crew member. The other visitors we will generally permit, are press, trade union representatives, or verified casting directors or scouts in the entertainment industry. All visitors will be expected to adhere to the professional standards of our production, and to sign in. . We do not usually permit members of the public to come in and sit in for a cuppa.

At shows, visitors are not permitted backstage. If family or friends have come to see a show, they must wait for you in the auditorium or bar. The people permitted backstage are actors, stage crew and venue staff, only.

Visitors are not permitted to make recordings or photographs of rehearsals without explicit permission from the company directors.

Drugs and alcohol

Actors and stage crew are not permitted in either rehearsals or shows to use, or be under the influence of, alcohol or recreational drugs. If someone has been shopping, they are

welcome to carry sealed & unopened alcohol purchases for consumption when they get home.

Actors and stage crew must not, however, bring any illegal recreational drugs - including cannabis- into the rehearsal or show space, even in sealed packets, or share age restricted products like alcohol or tobacco, to underage people.

Public conduct

When in public, wearing any items that identify you as connected with the South Devon Players, including branded clothing, lanyards, costumes, etc, you are required to behave in a professional manner and not bring our team into disrepute – we expect that you are polite to other people, not engage in antisocial or illegal activities, or sexually explicit humour.

If asked something about South Devon Players, please respond factually, with full awareness of the show/ project, what we do, and how to find out more. If you don't know something, be honest about it and give the person our website or social media to check.

Working with schools and students

Often some of our team will be asked to work with schools or colleges, delivering classes, learning, workshops and performances

The precise details for each booking will be communicated with the cast and crew as early as possible; however, there are some basic rules:

Students will be accompanied by staff at all times. As external visitors, we will be accompanied by school staff as well. All phones must be switched off and in your bag, with especial note to not take photographs in schools or colleges, or to share any identifying information about any students you meet. Changing clothing must ONLY take place in spaces removed from students; eg in the schools staff-only area.

You are likely to meet students with special educational needs, and will be expected to be patient , and calm with any different behaviours, and to follow the staff lead.

Avoid touching students. There should be no reason to do so. For example, if a student hugs you, don't hug them back and keep your hands in plain view of others.

Don't share personal contact details with students or add them on social media. If they are asking for more information, they should address that request to the school/ college staff, who can work directly with South Devon Players via our official website and email, to provide them with the relevant information.

Be very clear that any action choreography, fights or weapons use in a show, must NOT be tried at home.

All interactions with students should be safe, positive, speak to them as equals, and be positive & empowering.

Copyright

Copyright is taken very seriously at South Devon Players. All images, designs, choreography, photos, and videos, are copyright, as are our in-house scripts. The only things which may be “Creative Commons licenced” are music used in the shows, Shakespeare or other very old texts (eg Greek dramas), and in those cases must still be attributed to their creators as required in the specific Creative Commons licence terms for that specific piece of intellectual property.

Sharing copyright content without permission or correct attribution, may result in being removed from the production, and a legal cease & desist order being made.

In-house scripts/ songs or other intellectual property must not be shared, adapted, performed or sent to friends, outside of the company, without express written permission from the company directors.

Similarly, if someone (eg a sound or projection technician) wants to use a specific piece of music or design that they have found elsewhere, the copyright and usage of that specific piece of intellectual property must be located and provided to the company for correct attribution. If there is not explicit permission to use it (eg you found a song or video on youtube but did not contact the creator and receive permission; or the Creative Commons licence does not allow for usage in a ticketed theatre production) this piece of intellectual property must not be used.

When our work is put online for streaming, we have confirmed with the streaming platforms which we use, that our work is not to be shared or harvested for Artificial Intelligence adaptation or training. While that does not always stop third parties browsing online, it protects our work as far as is possible.

Sharing photographs or videos of yourself in your portfolio on your website or social media should always be correctly described and attributed with links back; eg “Jane Smith as the character Lady Rose, promotional photograph from theatre production *A Walk On the Beach*, with www.southdevonplayers.com. Photograph by Alan Jones – www.alanjonesphotography.com “)

Organisation origins

The South Devon Players is a new, and constantly evolving approach to theatre-making. Involving people of all levels of experience, from beginners to seasoned professionals, the Players create full scale dramatic productions primarily focussing on historical events and classical texts, made accessible for people of all ages and backgrounds.

We are based in the fishing port Brixham in South Devon, and our core work involves performing around the Southwest area, specialising in full length theatre shows based on researched historical events and classical literature. We also film our shows to stream online to wider global audiences.

We were founded during the winter of 2005/6 to create inclusive opportunities for people in the local area (and some from the wider Devon area) to create high-quality theatre projects as a collective, thereby developing / furthering professional skills, careers and

portfolios towards working in the entertainment industry, for local people who, due to distance and financial constraints cannot leave to go to drama school in the cities.

This idea came about because the area where we are is not close to cities where such opportunities exist, and it was initially started by a local actor who, being an autistic woman of colour, found it very hard to even be accepted by local amateur theatre, despite years of training and experience, then finding other local people who also wanted to find local performance opportunities which were very few and far between. By collaborating together to find someone who owned a car, and having clearouts, the group was founded on the £80 proceeds of a stand at a carboot sale.

We welcome people from absolute beginners, through to people who have been professional performers for decades, and all work together in a friendly, supportive team, and are open to people of all ages from 16, to, dare I say it, 116.

People working with us have gone on to work in large scale film & TV productions, to further training inclusive of RADA and Bristol Old Vic, and build professionally recognised portfolios based on their involvement.

Audience feedback is also extremely positive from our shows and projects. Over the years we have explored all manner of content, from the local history of the fishing port that is our home town, to Arthurian and Viking mythology, adaptations of classical literature like Ben Hur, and a good smattering of uncut Shakespeare.

We have also opened adults theatre classes in partnership with Brixham Theatre as the only organisation in the area to provide formal theatre training to adults. It is very difficult to obtain funding for this work, and while SDP has had a few small grants for minor sideline projects over the years, the group is mostly funded by ticket sales, and selling donated secondhand items on ebay.

We save a lot of costs by using reclaimed and secondhand materials for which we use for building costumes and props – very few items are bought new unless it is completely unavoidable, with no loss to production quality.

What's where (our website, social media, etc)

website: <https://www.southdevonplayers.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sdevonplayers>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/southdevonplayers>

Bluesky : [@sdevonplayers.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/sdevonplayers.bsky.social)

X : <https://www.x.com/sdevonplayers>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/@southdevonplayers>

Nextdoor: <https://nextdoor.co.uk/pages/the-south-devon-players-theatre-film-company>

COMPANY POLICIES AVAILABLE AT <https://www.southdevonplayers.com/governance-documents.html>

Profitshare System

This is the usual way of working out payment from the shows. It should be noted that there is not a guaranteed amount. While we are constantly applying for arts funding and ways to raise Equity-rate payments, this has so far eluded us, and with our fundraising relying on selling second hand items in ebay, and market stalls, the best we are able to do, is share the money from ticket sales to the cast and crew.

The amounts to be shared are the total "ticket take" less the hire of the performance space. We do not deduct hire of the community centre for rehearsals, costumes, printing etc; as these are things that our ebay and market stalls, are able to cover.

From mid 2024, we have a slightly new way of working out the profit share. While this is aimed to still ensure that everyone in the production receives an equal split of the ticket profits from the show, we have had a number of situations where for example, a few people are putting in up to 60+ hours per week, including on publicity, making props and costumes, driving across Devon or further to transport other people and shop props, setting up and packing down, etc, resulting in illness and burnout, whereas others maybe put in a couple of hours in the week for a rehearsal and no more.

A show done with this profitshare model is even more a collaborative effort than other models, as we are all reliant on one another for things being done excellently and the show being a success.

Regardless of the amount of time or effort put in, as it has stood in the past, each person gets the same amount at the end of the show run/ project, and a number of people have been feeling that this is unfair when someone doing 60+ hours per week for five months, gets the same as someone doing a couple of hours, resulting in some bad feeling about this; so the new model is that the main role taken by the creative, will receive 50% of an equal split, and then be asked to help with two smaller (but equally important) tasks, each worth an additional 25% of that full split – this means that it all adds up to that 100% equal share.

For example:

Main task: actor - 50%

Additional task 1 – helping with setup and packdown of the show -25%

Additional task 2 – taking posters for shows to shops in local area- 25%

or

Lead actor (eg title role, or two largest roles) – 75%

Additional task 1 – helping with setup and packdown of the show -25%

This is aimed to ensure that each person helps rather than leaving it to others to do, and to

address the disparity which we have been seeing. Alternatively it may be that someone takes on two roles which do not clash from the “main role” list, in which case both roles are weighted as 50% each. A person playing a lead/ title role will have 75% for that role, reflecting the size of the part, and be asked to take on one additional role.

List of main tasks:

- Actor
- Director/ assistant director
- Sound tech
- Lighting tech
- Projection tech
- Stage manager
- Filming for streaming
- Choreographer

List of additional tasks.

- helping with get-in and get-out at performance venues
- publicity – at least one one of the following tasks (delivering posters to shops/ community notice boards in your local area - sharing show posters and publicity materials regularly on your social media - door to door leaflet drops in your local area
- – arranging and confirming press at shows, or attendance at shows by PMA registered agent/ venue bookers/ arts funders/ bona-fide theatre reviewers)
- driving (helping to take non-family, or set/ gear to & from performances. fuel will be covered)
- Assisting with costume making / dressing (dressers must be aged over 18)
- Stagehand

(if you want to help with something else, please talk to us!)

Additional external resources

Equity guidance which you may find useful:

You should be able to access these without a login.

Safe auditioning: <https://www.equity.org.uk/advice-and-support/casting-and-auditions>

Equity for Women (includes transgender women) <https://www.equity.org.uk/advice-and-support/dignity-at-work/equity4women-toolkit>

Health and safety in performance: <https://www.equity.org.uk/advice-and-support/health-and-safety>

Equity guidance on bullying and harassment: <https://www.equity.org.uk/advice-and-support/dignity-at-work/bullying-harassment>

Equality Act 2010 : <https://www.equity.org.uk/advice-and-support/know-your-rights/right-to->

[equal-treatment/the-equality-act-2010](#)

Creating Safe Spaces: <https://www.equity.org.uk/advice-and-support/dignity-at-work/creating-safe-spaces>

Guidance on AI: <https://www.equity.org.uk/campaigns-policy/stop-ai-stealing-the-show>

Other useful information

Guidance on child actor licencing: <https://www.nncee.org.uk/page/485/what-is-child-performance>

Playing Shakespeare masterclass: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLboSQWmG70j_S2nWkRIncZYW49nLeFKWj

Stanislavsky acting exercises to do at home: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLf07CR0R-Drba6iXtLjOwyBYKTvTRXQBI>